

## 4.0 Environmental Setting

A discussion of the environmental setting including location, climate, topography, and other contextual physical characteristics of the UCSP area is provided in this section. A more detailed description of existing environmental conditions is provided at the beginning of each impact issue-specific discussion contained in Section 5.0, Environmental Impact Analysis. The environmental setting and existing conditions addressed throughout this EIR are those which existed when the NOP for the EIR was published, August 2005.

### 4.1 Location

The UCSP project site encompasses an area of approximately 1,700 acres located in the downtown urban core of the City of Chula Vista, California. The UCSP area is located approximately 18 miles north of the United States International Border with Mexico and 135 miles south of Los Angeles. The UCSP area is bounded by Interstate 5 on the west, C Street on the north, Del Mar Avenue on the east, and L Street on the south. Within the 1,700-acre UCSP boundary lies the smaller 690-acre Subdistricts Area which, as described in the previous Section 3.0 Project Description, constitutes the focus area of the UCSP and the area for which UCSP development standards, guidelines, and other implementation programs will guide future new and redevelopment (Figure 4-1).

The UCSP area is the urban core of Chula Vista and is highly urbanized primarily with low-rise structures developed in the 1950s with some mid-rise and high-rise structures developed in the 1970s. The urban core functions as the business, shopping, and government center of Chula Vista and contains the City's oldest established residential neighborhoods. Photographs 4-1 through 4-6 were taken on August 9, 2005 and show representative views of the following locations within the UCSP area:

- Third Avenue at H Street (Photograph 4-1)
- Third Avenue at F Street (Photograph 4-2)
- Fourth Avenue at F Street (Photograph 4-3)
- Broadway at F Street (Photograph 4-4)
- H Street at Third Avenue (Photograph 4-5)
- Broadway at H Street (Photograph 4-6)

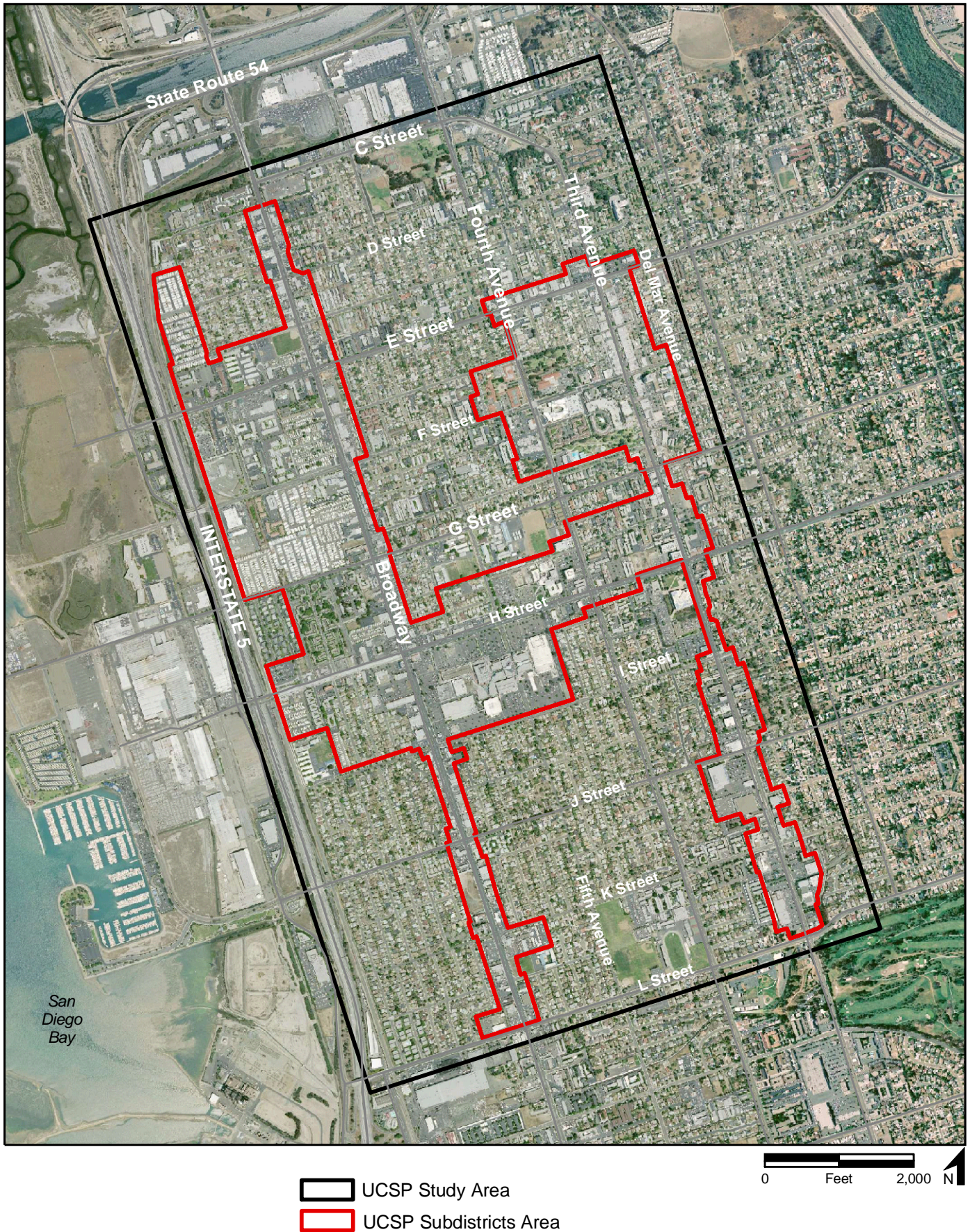


FIGURE 4-1  
Aerial Photograph of Project



PHOTOGRAPH 4-1  
Third Avenue at H Street, Looking North



PHOTOGRAPH 4-2  
Third Avenue at F Street, Looking South



PHOTOGRAPH 4-3  
Fourth Avenue at F Street, Looking North



PHOTOGRAPH 4-4  
Broadway at F Street, Looking South



PHOTOGRAPH 4-5  
H Street at Third Avenue, Looking West



PHOTOGRAPH 4-6  
Broadway at H Street, Looking North

Photographs 4-1 and 4-2 are representative views of downtown Third Avenue's pedestrian-oriented specialty shops, restaurants, and small businesses that primarily serve local residents. Photograph 4-3 shows a representative view of the area where the City's civic center, central library, and police headquarters are located. Photographs 4-4 and 4-6 are representative views of Broadway's auto-oriented commercial strip malls, auto repair and service uses, and lodging. Photograph 4-5 shows a representative view of H Street near Chula Vista's regional shopping mall.

## **4.2 Climate**

The climate of the region which encompasses the City of Chula Vista is identified as Mediterranean, which is characterized by warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Clear skies predominate for much of the year due to a semi-permanent high-pressure cell located over the Pacific Ocean. This high-pressure cell also drives the dominant onshore circulation and helps to create subsidence and radiation temperature inversions. Subsidence inversions occur during the warmer months when descending air associated with the high-pressure cell comes in contact with cool marine air. Radiation inversions typically occur on winter nights when air near the ground cools by radiation and the air aloft remains warm.

An average of 10 inches of rain falls each year from November to early April, while the remainder of the year is typically dry. Measurable rain falls on 20 days per year, with only six of these days experiencing moderate (0.5 inch in 24 hours) rainfall.

## **4.3 Topography**

The UCSP area's topography is relatively flat, with elevations that range from 20 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to a maximum of 110 feet AMSL. The UCSP area lies approximately two miles east of the southern extent of San Diego Bay. The bay stretches west another half-mile to the Coronado Peninsula which faces open ocean on its west side.

Topographic contours generally trend north-south, roughly paralleling the west and east boundaries of the UCSP area. The lower elevations occur along the western boundary of the UCSP and gradate higher as one proceeds east. Elevations of 60 to 90 feet AMSL cover the central part of the UCSP area and most of the Subdistricts Area. The southeast corner of the UCSP area has the highest elevation, with the area of the Subdistricts Area south of H Street along Third Avenue being the highest at 100 to 110 feet AMSL.

## 4.4 Setting

As can be seen in Figure 4-1, the UCSP area is largely developed, with few vacant parcels remaining. The area serves as the traditional central core of the city and also provides linkages to the Bayfront to the west and newer master planned communities to the east. This highly urbanized setting is sparsely vegetated. Ornamental trees, parkways, lawns, and gardens comprise the area's perennial vegetation.

Retail uses are located primarily along Broadway from E to L Streets, H Street from I-5 to Third Avenue, and along Third Avenue from E to H Streets. The UCSP area has three major commercial streets that offer different types of shopping: (1) Broadway's auto-oriented commercial strip malls, auto repair and service uses, and lodging; (2) H Street's Chula Vista Center (regional shopping mall); and (3) Downtown Third Avenue's pedestrian-oriented specialty shops, restaurants, and small businesses that primarily serve local residents.

The urban core also includes significant areas for civic uses including the Civic Center, Chula Vista Public Library, Fire Station Number 1, and new Police Station; all located at the intersection of F Street and Fourth Avenue. The South County Regional Center, providing courtroom, records, and other administrative functions, is located at the southwest intersection of Third Avenue and H Street.

Residential areas west of Second Avenue and north of I Street along with areas west of Broadway and south of I Street are considered to be in transition, with portions of these areas zoned and developed with a mix of large- and small-scale multi-family residential, as well as commercial office uses. Outside of the UCSP Subdistricts Area boundary, existing residential neighborhoods are considered to be stable.

Streets and freeways account for an estimated 30 percent of the area. Circulation in the UCSP area is primarily provided through the traditional street grid pattern, which was established in the early 1900s and remains almost intact today. Roadways that run east-west are usually 'streets' and roadways running north-south are usually 'avenues.' However, over the years this traditional grid system has been interrupted, especially in the northwest portion of the UCSP area between I-5 and Broadway, disrupting connectivity between neighborhoods.